

Hunting of the Beluga by the Gilyaks of the Village Puir

(Okhota na belukhu u Giliakov derevni Puir)

by

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433 As L. Schrenk (1) rightly points out, hunting of the beluga

1. L. Schrenk, Ob Inorodtsakh Amurskovo Kraia,
v. II, [Concerning the Natives of the Amur Region]

(white dolphin) does not play an important part in the economy of the Gilyaks which is based on fishing and, to a lesser extent, on seal hunting. Nevertheless, hunting of the beluga, which is now of an accidental rather than systematic nature, contains some features which merit description. These features are:

- 1) The primitive Communist character of the distribution of the catch. The hunters as well as the other village folk share the beluga. Not so in seal hunting, where the quarry is shared by the hunters only. (2)

2. E. A. Kreinovich, Morskoi Promysel Giliakov Derevni Kul', [Fishing Industry of the Gilyaks of the village Kul], Sovetskaiia Etnografiia, 1934, no. 5.

- 2) The religious ceremony held by the Gilyaks on the occasion of a successful hunt.

124 We did our best to authenticate the facts we are about to
225 report by writing them down in the Gilyak language under the
115 dictation of the informant. Besides writing down texts, we
collected maps, plans of summer and winter settlements,
plans indicating the location of landed property, drawings,
etc.

In the present article we publish drawings by the Gilyak Mytka which depict all the important phases of a hunt of the beluga and two accounts of the hunt; one told by the author of these drawings, the other--by the Gilyak Khor.

115 Mytka lives in the village Puir. He is about 35 years old. He is one of the most outstanding and talented Gilyaks I have met. He has a tremendous thirst for knowledge. When I went to see him for the first time, he was lying on his plank-bed and reading Goroda i Gody [Towns and Years] by K. Fedin, a book that he took out from the library at his place of work. Mytka is very much interested in problems of technology. The model of the airplane that I brought to the anthropological and ethnographical museum was made by him for his son. Mytka likes to draw, but, unfortunately

- 115 his drawings have not been preserved. He is unable to go to Leningrad to study for he cannot leave his family and his old father.
- 225 Mytka made the sketches of the beluga hunt at my request.
- 124 Three of these are rough sketches which [109] I was fortunate enough to find at Mytka's. They are considerably better than the final sketches in which Mytka partly imitates the style of sketches he had seen in Russian books. (1)

1. On publication we were forced for technical reasons to substitute slanting lines for Mytka's shading.

Description of the sketches:

Sketch 1. The Gilyaks, having sighted a beluga, depart on the hunt.

Sketch 2. The Gilyaks have driven the beluga to a shallow. The Gilyak at the prow is about to throw the harpoon.

Sketch 3. A detail relating to the second sketch.

Sketch 4. Flight of the harpoon aimed at the beluga; the harpoon is supposed to hit the beluga at the moment when it emerges from the water.

Sketch 5. The beluga drags the float behind it. When the harpoon hits the beluga, the tip of the harpoon which is tied to a long strap, remains in the body of the beluga. The movements of the beluga are hindered by the float attached to the other end of the strap.

Sketch 6. The Gilyaks have caught the float and are getting ready to thrust the second harpoon at the beluga.

Sketch 7. The Gilyaks haul the beluga to the side of the boat and are about to kill it with a blow of a lance in the area of the respiratory orifice.

Sketch 8. The Gilyaks take the beluga which is fastened to the side of the boat to the village. An old woman sits on the shore and beats on a board using two sticks. This peculiar music stands for a welcome for the killed beluga.

Sketch 9. The hunters have brought the beluga to the village. The inhabitants of the village have come out to meet them and are about to haul the beluga ashore. The old woman continues to play on the board.

Sketch 10. The Gilyaks haul the beluga ashore.

Sketch 11. A Gilyak cuts up the beluga.

Sketch 12. The Gilyaks depart, each with his share of the beluga.

Sketch 13 & 14. The head of the beluga on a birch (From photographs).

225 The sketches do not include all the details of the beluga hunt. Mytka's account, dictated to me on June 29, 1931, in the village Puir, supplements the sketches. We give here a faithful translation of his account.

"During the ebb tide the belugas head inshore. After the tide receded, he gathered his friends (and said): 'Let us go after it (in the sea).' We went in pursuit. When the beluga headed out to the fairway we chased it back to a shallow. When it could not go any further the man at the prow who held a harpoon got ready and waited for it (the beluga) to appear (to come up). When it broke the surface, he lanced it. Then he threw the float. We let the beluga drag the float. When it got tired we approached it and lanced it a second time. Then we came close to it and hauled it to the side of the boat. We hooked the beluga and hauled it (out of the water). Then he hit it with a lance (that is, pierced it) (2)

2. The Gilyaks kill the beluga by lancing it in the area of the respiratory orifice.

When we killed it we tied a rope to it and hauled it ashore.

225 While we were hauling it, the old woman came down to the
533 shore and began striking the board with a stick. (3) When we
824

- 182 3. Only in Puir do they welcome the caught beluga by such music. I have not observed this custom in any other village.

brought it (to the shore), we came up to the shore prow first. (4) Having untied the beluga, we hauled it to the shore

4. Usually the Gilyaks come up to the shore stern first, but when they bring a beluga, they come prow first.

[112] and pulled it out. We put the board on which the woman was beating under the head of the dolphin. The old men sent the youths to gather dozgon grass and piskar plant. (1) Then^A we

1. The Amur Gilyaks "feed" the plant piskar to all captured sea-animals such as sea-lions, seals, and belugas. They put this plant in the mouth of the killed animal (cf. our article "Morskoi Promysel

225 Giliakov Derevni Kul', " [Sea fishing among the
 533 Gilyaks of the Village Kul] Sovetskaia Etnografiia,
 824 1934, no. 5.).
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225 fed the head of the dolphin. Then we came down (to the
 476 shore) and the old men cut up the dolphin. [113] When they
 cut it up, we called all the people (ordered them to come),
 spoke to them, and made each one of them take (let them
 take) his share. We gave less to the "sitting" men (that is,
 those who did not participate in the hunt). (1) We gave more

1. The Gilyak Shurman, from the village Lyangr, told me
 that they divide the beluga into equal parts. Only
 when they kill two--three belugas do they give some-
 what greater shares to the hunters.

to those who went to sea. After they had taken away their
 225 shares, we cut up the head (literally, broke it up). After we
 782 cut up the head, in the evening, we sent the young men to cut
 778 some birch wood; we sent them to cut some rowan-trees.
 Then we got some rowan shavings and put them in the
 respiratory opening. We cooked some cereal and put it in
 the sea-dish [Russian, Morskoye blyudo] We prepared some
 berries and put it in the sea-dish. Then we sent the chil-
 dren to bury the head. When they were ready to go, an old
 man went with them. They put the head down on the place
 where offerings to the sea are made. (2) They took the eyes

2. Near each village, there is a separate place from
 which offerings are brought to the sea.

out of the head and, having dug a hole in the ground, they
 put the eyes in the center (of the hole). (3) After they buried

3. In the village Puir the eyes of the beluga are
 "buried" on the place where offerings to the sea
 are made. In other villages the eyes and the
 head are suspended in a birch tree.

the eyes, they scattered some rice and berries in the sea.
 Then they carried the head to Elzs. (4) They hung the head

4. Elzs--a place where the heads are "buried". Each
 clan has its own elzs. When they kill a beluga, they

225 cut down a young birch, stick it on the elz-s
 782 and suspend the head of the beluga in the tree..
 778

on a birch-tree. Then they scattered some more rice and berries. (5) Then we sat down around it. We fed the children

5. That is, they spread rice and berries on the head of the beluga.

and went down again. Then we got a young man to take a white stone and put it in the sea-dish. Then we returned and went home. When we came home we put the stone in the fire place." (6)

6. The stone which they put in the fire place is a payment to the master of fire for the successful outcome of the hunt (cf. our article "Morskoï Promysel Giliakov Derevnî Kul', [Sea fishing among the Gilyaks of the village Kul]).

182 The methods of beluga hunting as described by the Gilyak
 225 Mytka in his account and pictured in his sketches are characteristic of the village Puir and partly of the village Lyangr. The hunt proceeds differently in other places. [114]

The account of the Gilyak Khor (from the village Chomi(?)) telling of a beluga hunt undertaken by him and his friend in 1930 supplies us with enough information to enable us to distinguish between the methods used by the Khor and those described above. (Khor's account was written down by me in the fisheries of Dzhaori in 1931) [For Mytka's account, see category 225, pp. 111-113; for Kor's account, pp. 114-116--Analyst.]

225 We present a translation of the account, striving to com-
 103 municate the spirit of the original.

"During a run of herring, the four of us, two adults and two children, went in a boat to the Big Cape (Pila-kr-) to hunt for belugas. When we approached the whirlpool (Polx), we came ashore and took out our things. The animal (that is, a seal, a beluga) was swimming up (1) to the shore. The

1. Literally: "rose up to the shore."

children heated tea, and we took the harpoons and went up.

225 We went to the "Cape Facing the Sea." (Tol-nun-iv-Knək)(2)
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2. It is of interest to note that the Gilyaks sometimes name places according to their economic usage. This cape is named Tol-nun-iv-knək because from this place the Gilyaks watch the sea waiting for the sea animals which swim past the cape.

When we arrived at the "Cape Facing the Sea" no animal came up to the shore. We went back. We descended to our place. We had tea. We finished drinking our tea and loaded our things. We went to Otvax. From there we headed out to the open sea. When we were going down by boat to (the place) across Vaspn, the belugas came in behind us. The mother had a young one. (3) So they swam. When they passed by

3. He means the female beluga with a young.

us, I got up and wanted to shoot. As I was about to shoot, my friend (said): "It is too far." He did not want me to shoot. Then I said: "All right, I will fire, we will see." When I got up, the young one broke the surface. I let it emerge and fired. Then I fired (that is, I hit it). The young one plunged beneath the surface. I thought for a long time that it was lost. "Ah! There it swam away, it came up." Then we rowed and followed it. We caught up with it. We hurled the harpoon. Then we got up and lanced it a second time. Then we pulled the strap and hauled the beluga to the side of the boat, we fastened it, pierced it with a lance, and killed it. We took it in tow. Our children were happy. Then we came ashore and hauled the beluga ashore. I went up the hill to gather piskar. I came back, shoved the grass in the respiratory opening of the beluga, and fed it. Then we cut off the strap, cut up the meat, dragged it away, ate some of it, and covered up the rest. We went to sleep. We slept. When we got up in the morning, the animal did not come up to the shore. We ate and loaded our things. Then we went by boat to Otvax. When we came to the upper side of Otvax (Otvax k'eqr-ksef hertox), the seals crawled out of the water at the tip of the cape. We went to the tip of the cape and untied the harpoons. At that time the animals swam up to the shore. We let them come up, we aimed and missed. Then the animals fled. Then we came up (the mountain) and went down to our boat. Afterwards, we went by boat and

225 landed at P'arquaiv. We slept. Afterwards, when we got up, the seals were on a stone sticking out of the water, on the other side of P'arquaiv. (4) Then the two of us went by

4. Near the shore of P'arquaiv there are stones on which the seals rest. These stones are called norpax.

boat and fired our (Berdan) rifles. We let them thrash in agony. We went into the water, hit them with a harpoon and dragged them ashore. Striking the heads of the seals with a stick, we killed them. We dragged them to our place, skinned them, cooked and ate them. Then we slept. Then we got up, we ate, and when we turned back to the Big Cape (Pila-kp), the belugas swam up to the shore. We let them swim up to the shore and, taking the harpoons, we went up to the cape "Facing the Sea." We went down to the end of the stone Norpax. There they were, one on each stone. We untied the harpoons. Then we let the belugas approach us. We aimed, but missed. I was picking out a strap when, suddenly, a beluga came near us. My friend aimed, hit and threw a float. Then the beluga swam out to sea. We went up (the hill) to our boat. Following the beluga, we headed out to sea. [115] We went by boat and caught the float. Pulling out the strap we dragged the beluga and flung (the harpoon) a second time. Our beluga towed us between and past steamboats. I took the (Berdan) rifle, aimed at the respiratory opening and killed the beluga. We quickly attached it to the stern. We went down. We rowed and came to (stopped at) our place. Here we could not drag it out (we lacked the strength). We waited for the ebb and got ashore. Then we gathered some pisk-r, came down, shoved it in the respiratory opening and fed the beluga. Then we cut it up. When we finished, we quickly put the straps in the boat. We also put our things in the boat. Then we took off and went to the end of the cape having a sledge [Mys imeyuschi nartu] (T'u ift kr- x). There was a storm there, the water came overboard, and we turned back to our places. We arrived. We took out all our things and dried them. We put part of the straps in the boat. We left our two children; the two of us went up in our boat to Hivzu. When we arrived, there were people there. We took out our things and, towing our own boat, we went down in another one. When we came down, we took the meat, our things and our friends. Then we went back. We landed at Hivzu. There we slept. Next

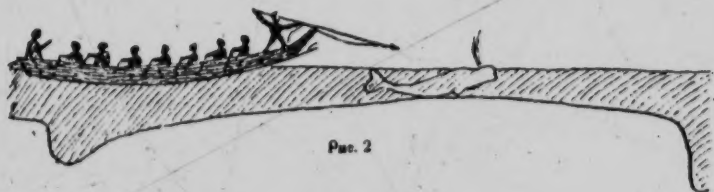
225 morning we returned to our village. We took everything out
and put it on the dock. Then we slept. Next day we got up
225 in the morning and called the people. We took off the head,
252 cut it up, fed the head to the people raw, (1) and cooked the
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1. The Gilyaks call all raw food talq. The Gilyaks
eat certain kinds of fish such as Siberian salmon
and certain parts of seals and belugas raw.

parts designed for cooking as well as the jaws. After we
cooked it, we took it out. Some ate the meat; others took
off the meat from the jaws and ate it. Then we went to
gather Hapzas. Then we brought it, cooked it, ground it
and made muvi. Then we got some rowan shavings and
shoved them (in the nose of the beluga). Then we took the
head; we took it to throw it out. Here we cut off a young
tree. We cut off a forked alder tree. We spread muvi over
the shavings stuck in the nose of the beluga; we spread muvi
on the holy bones. We stuck the tree through the ear-ring
holes of the beluga, lifted it and hung it up here. Then we
lifted the holy bones (jugular vertebrae) and tied them to
the tree. We put down the jaws and pressed them with a
stick."



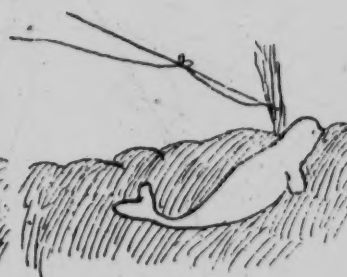
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Pac. 2



Pac. 3



Pac. 4



Pac. 5



Рис. 6



Рис. 7



Рис. 8

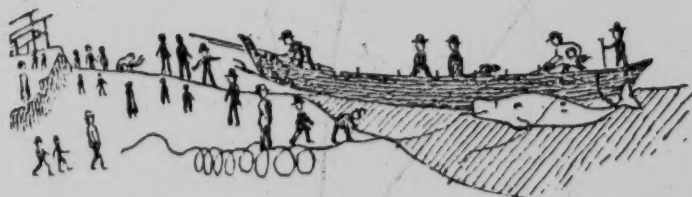


Рис. 9

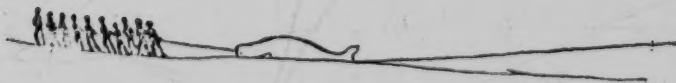


Рис. 10



Рис. 11

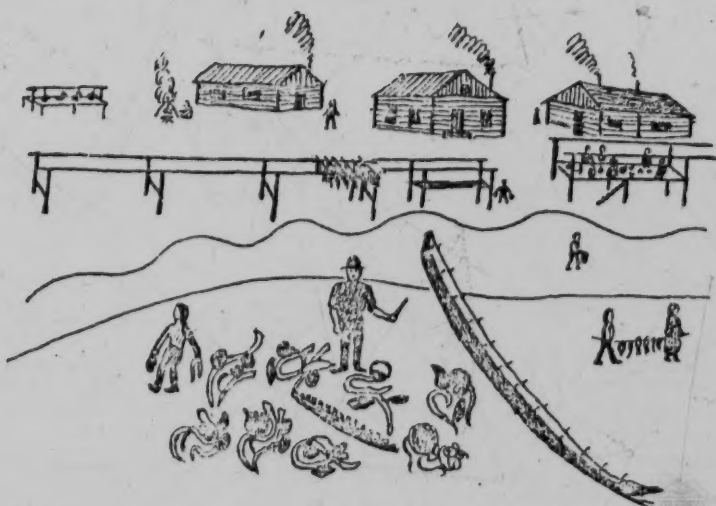


Рис. 12



Рис. 13

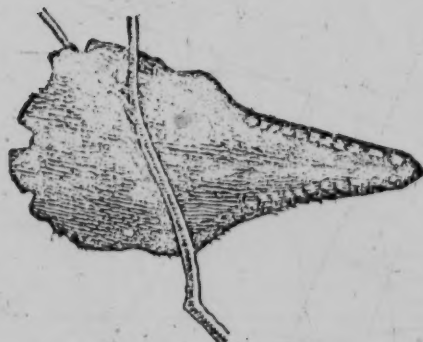


Рис. 14